

A Fate Forlorn

“But I love him, I can’t do that.”

She readjusts herself in her seat, sets her right leg from above her left down to the floor, and with her elbows now on her knees and her hands hanging loosely in front of her, she looks me straight in the eyes and says, “does he?”

I stiffen at that question, and she stares back at me like she wasn’t expecting an answer, but rather this exact physical response.

She rests herself back in her chair, her fingers intertwined on her lap. And for some reason, it does take a toll on me. Why would a professional psychotherapist tell me that my own boyfriend doesn’t love me?

He’s said it to me a million times, maybe never with the same magnitude as the statement she just made, and maybe sometimes a little less frequently than other times, but why am I giving the benefit of the doubt to the odds of one to a million right now?

“He’s a narcissist,” she says. “Narcissists date people for convenience, not for love. He gives you the impression of love as long as you conform to his wishes.”

I can feel her words lingering around my feet, slowly making their way upwards.

“And the moment you try to step outside of the boundaries he has set for you, he shuts down. It puts him in a state of war with you. You’ve already gone there, and you’ve witnessed the drastic change in his behavior.”

I wish it was my friend telling me this and not my therapist, so I could tell her she didn’t know what she was talking about.

“He didn’t stop loving you when you said you were suffocating from the way he was treating you. Love to these people is like a trade, and once you give up your end of the deal— letting him be in control, he gives up his, which is all the intimacy you’ve been missing from him. It’s called emotional neglect, and it’s one of the narcissist’s different tools to get what they want. And you’ve been giving him that all along. We call it ‘narcissistic supply,’ it feeds their ego and offers them a sense of gratification they can’t otherwise have.”

I think her words have climbed far enough to be clenching around my heart when I finally start trying to push them off, “no, that part was my fault. I was mean to him that day.”

“All you said to him was no. And that’s okay, you can’t always say yes to everything. ‘No’ is his biggest point of weakness. He needs you to always say yes to him.”

I’m breaking into tears as I replay the same exact words coming out of his mouth.

“Don’t say no to me, don’t be the person who says no to me. I need you to be the only person who never says no to me.”

Is that all I am to you, your yes-girl?

“Just consider what I said,” she says.

“I can’t leave him, he wouldn’t even consider doing that to me.”

She presses her lips together and bites her tongue inside of her mouth.

“The behavior of narcissists is often compared to that of addicts. And addicts don’t quite leave the thing they’re addicted to, they keep coming back to it. It’s the only thing that makes them feel good when they’re miserable. You can stay with him, but so will the feeling of inadequacy.”

She looks at her watch and it makes me want to ask her if it’s still ticking because of everything she just said to me.

“Our time is up for today,” she says, “would you like to book a session for next Friday at the same time as today?”

I come back to my senses, and mildly nod.

The weight of her words leaves the room with me. As innocuous as they were, her words only made me feel worse. I’ve been reading about narcissism since the day she told me I was falling subject to narcissistic abuse, and the best giveaway I have taken is that there is public contempt towards narcissists ad nauseam.

I don’t want to be one of those people who just leave the person they love because of something they have such little control over.

I can’t leave him, but I also can’t be one of those people stuck in a perfunctory relationship either.

I need to talk to him again, no matter how abject of a mistake my therapist says it would be to give him another platform to manipulate me all over again.

A few second thoughts later, I’m at his doorstep, and also at his mercy.

He leans over his right arm stretched across the doorframe, and eyes me up and down.

He makes way for me to enter, and I do.

I immediately feel locked up even though he doesn’t lock the door behind us.

He has this unusually calm demeanor about him, as though his struggle has just ended.

“Here I am again, you have everything you wanted and yet absolutely nothing you want.”

There’s no apology in his look, and he doesn’t deny that he wants nothing to do with me.

He’s feeding upon this, he wants me to be here, apologizing to him, begging him for forgiveness, when he knows pretty well I can never be enough to fulfill his fantasies.

That thought breaks me, and somehow, when he thrusts against me, it only feels colder.

Shivers run down my spine when his arms fold around my back and squeeze me onto his chest, and I bury my face there.

I start sobbing when I hear his heartbeat, and it makes me wonder if his heart circulates anything but blood.

Does it ever pump emotions?

I feel lonesome in his embrace, because I know he’s hugging me because I’m crying and not because I’m not feeling well.

He doesn't care if I feel well, he just loves it when I'm desperate enough to need him this badly. His ego feeds off of it.

I start pushing away, and his retraction only confirms my doubts.

Doesn't he know that I only push away from him so he can hug me harder?

I'm trying to push away the narcissist that is hugging me so I can get hugged back by the guy who hugs me because he loves me.

No one enjoys pity, yet no one enjoys it as much as a narcissist's lover.

Am I so love-bereft that I'm settling for pity just to feel like he cares about me?

"I have a weird question," I say.

That completely throws him off guard, and his calm demeanor immediately decimates. I think it was the word "weird" that made him feel so threatened; he can never handle anything unusual without throwing a fit.

I take a very calculated breath before I ask him, "if I were to ever..."

And I don't even have to finish my sentence before he reads it across my face and answers it across his.

It's surreal how his complexion can go from calm to paranoid to terrified in seconds.

He's shaking his head and taking a step back before it's me who's hugging him back.

He doesn't hug me back, and I don't know why I expect him to. Can't he even want me when I'm slipping away?

Does me breaking to the point of speaking of leaving him mean nothing beyond another inconvenience to make him want me less?

I hold his face because it breaks me to see him break, but I need to break him to see if there's any fragment of empathy in him.

I wipe away his tears, and it only makes them grow stronger. I feel like the worse person because I can't help but think he's using his own tears to manipulate me into giving into his will and giving up on my rebellion.

I've never wanted to be rebellious anyway; all I ever wanted to be was understood.

His crying makes me cry, and now I'm grabbing every bit of him that I can get a hold of, and he lifts me up and carries me.

I don't question where he's taking me, because if I didn't know I wanted to surrender to his will in the end, I wouldn't have put myself as bait to get just one shard of his attention.

He sets me on the couch, and he holds me around my ankles.

"I thought about what you said," he says, "I promise you, I did. In fact, it's all I've been thinking of since last night. I just have all of these obsessions that I can't control. I don't want to lose you because of how much I want you, but I also don't want to lose how much I want you because of your anger towards me. It may seem selfish, and it is selfish; I am selfish about having you. And that's why I want to have you be my way, because you're the only thing and everything I have ever wanted."

My therapist says a narcissist cannot feel empathy. But maybe they can feel sympathy.
And there is so much more love in having compassion for what you'll never understand.
"I love you, Beirut," he says.
He, every Lebanese who loves me too much to let me be unless I went his way.
But I love him too, and sometimes, you have to go along to get along.

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